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## FRANCE.

*Precautions against tuberculosis.*

[From advance sheets Consular Reports, No. 558.]

In accordance with instructions from the Department, Consul Cövert, of Lyons, under date of September 13, 1899, transmits the following translation of the report of the league for the prevention of tuberculosis for 1898 :

For every six persons, in this country, at least one dies of consumption. Of the 850,000 deaths that occur every year in France, over 140,000 are caused by pulmonary tuberculosis or phthisis, and this number, instead of decreasing, goes on augmenting every year. Hardly a family but pays to it a sad tribute. No disease, no scourge, can be compared to tuberculosis, so far as the number of the victims is concerned. All epidemic and contagious diseases combined—typhoid, varioloid, scarlatina, measles, diphtheria, cholera, etc.—do not cause half as many deaths.

We would then be acting like madmen if, knowing the means to diminish the ravages of this most terrible of our enemies, we did not as physicians make them known to the public; and if, knowing that tuberculosis may be transmitted from man to man and from animals to men, we knew means by which such transmission might be prevented or limited, we would be grossly culpable if we failed to make known such preventive measures. Science is to-day possessed of a knowledge of the means of diminishing the ravages of tuberculosis.

It is known that in the immense majority of cases a consumptive does not possess the germs of that disease at birth.

It is known, thanks to Villemin, that the greater number of the 140,000 consumptives who die yearly in France have caught the disease either in breathing the air charged with the germs of tuberculosis or, less often, by eating food which may accidentally contain those germs.

It is known that these germs of tuberculosis (bacilles de Koch), are spread by consumptives around them, each patient becoming, by his expectoration, a center of emission of these infected particles.

It is known that by certain simple precautions it is possible to destroy the greater part of these germs that are scattered through the atmosphere, and consequently, to prevent the greater number of cases of consumption.

It is known that contact with the consumptive is in no sense dangerous; that neither his person nor his breath is poisonous; that one can talk with him for hours together, inhale his breath, live with him, sleep with him, give him the most constant care and attention, without running any serious risk if certain precautions are taken, the principal one being to clean up his expectoration and not to delay destroying it until it has become dry and been taken up in the atmosphere.

It is known that by extreme cleanliness we not only prevent the patient from becoming dangerous to others, but that we do him a great service, for he is prevented from re-infecting himself and from destroying the beneficial effects of treatment which would often be successful if these precautions were rigorously enforced.

Therefore, the congress for the study of tuberculosis, where all the specialists of that disease were assembled, has issued a set of instructions to teach the public how to prevent the spread of the disease.

## TUBERCULOSIS INSTRUCTIONS.

Tuberculosis is, of all diseases, that which has the most victims. In large cities they make up from one-fourth to one-seventh of the mortality.

To explain this high figure, it must be understood that pulmonary phthisis is not the only manifestation of tuberculosis, as is erroneously believed. In fact, many cases of bronchial troubles, of pleurisy, of meningitis, of peritonitis, enteritis, of osseous and joint lesions, cold abscesses, etc., are of the same nature.

Tuberculosis is an infectious, parasitic disease, caused by microbes; but it can be caught by a healthy person from a patient only under special conditions, which we will state.

Besides, hereditary transmission, the tuberculosis microbe enters the human organism by the air in breathing, through the digestive organs in eating, through the skin by stings, scratches, sores, wounds, ulcers, etc.

The most frequent and the most dreadful source of contagion lies in the expectoration of consumptive patients. Almost harmless while in a liquid condition, it becomes dangerous when reduced to powder. It assumes that form often when spat upon the ground, the floor, or upon a wall; when it falls on clothing, bedclothes or sheets, curtains, handkerchiefs, napkins, etc.

When dried and in powder, it is stirred by the dust cloth, the broom, brush, or carpet beater. This dust, suspended in the air, enters the respiratory organs, falls upon portions of the body, upon objects used in cooking, plates, and dishes, and thus becomes a permanent danger to persons sojourning in the contaminated atmosphere. The germs of contagion also exist in the evacuations of the patients, produced either by saliva swallowed, or by intestinal lesions so common in such diseases.

It is indispensable therefore—

To take the most careful precautions regarding the expectoration of consumptives. It should always be ejected into porcelain or glass spittoons containing a certain quantity of liquid, and not in such matter as sawdust, bran, sand, or ashes. The handkerchief, upon which the patient should wipe his lips only and upon which he should never spit, should be renewed every day.

The contents of the spittoons should be mixed with sawdust or some other combustible and burned, or at least emptied into the water-closet. If emptied into a yard they may tuberculize fowls or allow microbes to spread through the air. No known disinfectant is powerful enough to rapidly destroy the tuberculous microbes contained in saliva; therefore the contents of spittoons should be destroyed by boiling or thrown into closets. At the same time there should be poured into the closets a solution of chloride of lime. It would be safer to mix the saliva with sawdust and burn it.

Spittoons should be used, not only in hospitals and private houses, but also in depots, barracks, and all places for public meetings.

These precautions should be taken in reference to all diseases that occasion much expectoration, because pneumonia, inflammation of the chest, congestion of the lungs, measles, whooping cough, catarrh, certain forms of bronchitis, laryngitis, etc., may be communicated by saliva dried and converted into dust.

Clothes soiled by a consumptive patient should be left some time in boiling water before being washed.

Avoid sleeping in a room with a consumptive patient, and remain in it as little as possible, unless the above-mentioned precautions are taken in regard to saliva.

Rooms in hotels, watering places, etc., occupied by consumptives should be so furnished and carpeted that disinfection can be readily accomplished after the departure of a patient.

After the death of a consumptive, the place inhabited by him should be carefully disinfected and thoroughly aired. New tenants should see that these precautions are taken.

After the death of a consumptive, all his clothing and bed linen should be well washed before being used and the room thoroughly disinfected by sulphur vapor and washed with chloride-of-lime water.

In private as well as public houses, carriages, omnibuses, hotels, theaters, etc., sweeping ought to be replaced by washing with a cloth wet with some antiseptic solution.

The parasite of this disease may also be found in beef (above all, cow beef), poultry, rabbits, and milk. The latter should be boiled, or, better still, sterilized. Milk is sterilized by placing the vessel containing it in a tin pail full of water and letting it boil forty-five minutes. The habit of drinking blood at slaughterhouses is dangerous and without any salutary results.

Some persons have a tendency to consumption and should be especially careful; for instance, those whose relatives have died from consumption or who are feeble from privations. The abuse of alcoholic liquors is particularly favorable to consumption. Over 2,000 infants under two years of age die annually of consumption in Paris.

This disease is curable, where it has not advanced too far, for those who are willing to submit to long months and sometimes years of treatment and repose in special sanitariums.